

Spiritual Desire
One Thing
Lesson 5 Psalm 27.1-14
061525

Introduction

- 1 For the last few weeks we have been looking at the Psalms and what they teach us about desire for God.
 - a Being a Christian is not just about learning, knowing and obeying God's Word but also about hungering, thirsting after and experiencing God himself.
 - b The Psalmist said, taste and see that the Lord is good. It's one thing to know that God is good, gracious, merciful and holy & but it's another thing to taste it or experience it. Occasionally I find myself knowing those things but not experiencing them.
- 2 There is an experience and we are talking about how to cultivate that experience in our walk with the Lord so that we don't fall victim to dead orthodoxy; believing all the right things about God but not experiencing God himself.
- 3 Undoubtedly the best place in the Bible to learn about this is in the Psalms. We began in Psalm 63 and then last week looked at Psalm 42. This morning we turn our attention to Psalm 27.

Of David. The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? ² When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. ³ Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. ⁴ One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. ⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. ⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord. ⁷ Hear my voice when I call, O Lord; be merciful to me and answer me. ⁸ My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek. ⁹ Do not hide your face

from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. ¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence. ¹³ I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:1-14).

- 4 This Psalm is so full of many valuable truths that we could take three or four weeks to study it.
 - a But all those truths would center around one request made by David near the beginning of the psalm found in (v4).
 - b It represents the single most important request of any believer who is hungering, thirsting and wanting to experience more of the Lord in their daily lives.

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple (Ps 27:4).
- 5 This “one thing” desire is so important when it comes to your relationship with the Lord. If you can cultivate it you can live a fearless life and handle any adversity. And that’s exactly how David begins the psalm.

The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? (v1)

- 1 David says three things about the Lord in this first verse ... that God is his light, his salvation and his stronghold.
 - a The Lord is my Light who dispels the darkness. The Lord is my salvation who delivers me from the enemy. And the Lord is my stronghold who secures me in adversity.
 - b And therefore, the only logical, rational conclusion is ... then of whom shall I be afraid? If someone or something else was my stronghold then I might have reason to fear. But if the Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?
 - c The New Testament says it like this: *If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31b*

- That doesn't mean that we have no one against us but rather no one can be successfully against us when God is for us.
- The world is against us, the nature of indwelling sin is against us, the devil is against us, difficult circumstances are against us. But it doesn't matter who is against us if God is for us. And since God is for us (Rom 8) whom or what shall we fear? (Ps 27)

2 David illustrates this logic with three “worse case scenarios” in (v 2-3,10) *When **evil men** advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. ³ Though an **army** besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. ¹⁰ Though **my father and mother** forsake me, the Lord will receive me. (Psalm 27:2-3,10).*

a As I was rereading this psalm it occurred to me how contrary David's words are to what you read in self-help books or what you hear a lot of in pulpits today.

- The advice today is don't dwell on negative possibilities. Instead think good thoughts and positive thoughts, then good things will happen to you. David's not doing that. In fact he's almost doing the opposite.
- Now in some circles this positive thinking/confession its called the “Law of attraction.” The main idea of the Law of Attraction is that “like attracts like.” The belief is that you have control over the outcomes of your life based on the positivity or negativity of your thinking and speaking.
- The Bible certainly says we should take every deceiving thought captive (2 Cor 10:5) and we should think on whatever is true, right, pure and praiseworthy (Phil 4:8).
- But nowhere does it say that our thoughts/words create or control our reality. That flies right in the face of what the Bible tells us about Who is in charge of the outcomes of our lives and working in all things for our good (Rom 8:28). Sovereign God.

b So David, instead of thinking and speaking only the positive, includes the negative too.

- He thinks negative thoughts, worse-case scenarios like armies that attack and even worse parents who abandon.
- He is not being attacked or abandoned. He's just thinking about it and saying if he was attacked or abandoned he would not fall apart

because ... if the Lord is my refuge, light and salvation whom or what shall I fear?

- c Now it's one thing to know this, it's quite another to live it out. David knows this about the Lord, but how does what he knows about the Lord become something he experiences in the Lord? The answer is found in vs. 4-6.

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the *house of the Lord* all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his *temple*.⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his *dwelling*; he will hide me in the shelter of his *tabernacle* and set me high upon a rock.⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his *tabernacle* will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord (Ps 27:4-6).

- 1 In these verses, which reveal the source of David's confidence, he uses four terms to describe the same thing ... house of the Lord, his temple, his dwelling and his tabernacle ... are all terms used to describe ancient Israel's portable worship structure called the Tabernacle of Moses.
 - a After God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery he gave Moses instructions to build the Tabernacle as a place where he would meet his people.



- b It was a large tent like structure with three sections, the outer court with a bronze altar and basin, the holy place (golden lampstand, table of bread & altar of incense) and the most holy place.



- c In the most holy place was the ark of the covenant, a wooden box overlaid with gold with a covering lid called the mercy seat. There above the mercy seat and between the two cherubim angles is where the presence of God was manifested.

- 2 So the Tabernacle was the place God dwelled with his people and the people met with & worshipped God. And when David refers to it he is thinking of it in two ways: 1) the actual physical tabernacle and 2) what the tabernacle represents. He is firstly thinking about the physical structure.
 - a We see this in the last part of verse 6 ... *at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.*
 - b He says *at his Tabernacle* which refers to *a place*, the actual physical tabernacle.
- 3 But in these verses he is not only thinking of the actual physical Tabernacle, he is also thinking about something even greater which is indicated in (v4,5).
 - a *For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle ... (v5).*
 - The day of trouble for David involves being pursued by an enemy army. But the Tabernacle was not a fortress, it was merely a tent which offered no protection from an army coming after him with swords and spears.
 - Therefore, when David said God would hide him in the shelter of the Tabernacle he must have been referring to something greater than the actual physical Tabernacle.
 - b *One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life (v4)*
 - Only the priests were allowed inside the Tabernacle, not kings. So how could David dwell in it, let alone every day? Furthermore, it would not be possible for David to fulfill his role as king while spending everyday dwelling in the tabernacle.
 - Therefore, David must have been referring to something greater than the actual physical Tabernacle.
- 4 So what was David asking for when he said the only thing I want is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life? (v4)
 - a He is not asking to experience the presence of God in the physical Tabernacle, he is asking that the presence of God in the tabernacle be a living, daily reality to him where ever he was and whatever he was doing. He wanted to know what Jesus said to his disciples just before his ascension ... I am with you always. You won't see me but you'll know I am with you.

- b David was saying I want to live with an abiding sense of God's presence. I want to be close to God. I don't just want to know about God, I want to know him. He repeats this desire down in (v8) when he says ...*My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek. (v8).*
- In the Hebrew God's face was a figure of speech that meant closeness to God. So, David was saying it's not enough for me to know you from afar, I want to know you up close, face to face.
 - I want to really know you not just know about you. That's the one thing I really desire.
- 5 Now when you have that disposition nothing moves you, nothing can make you anxious, fearful, despairing or depressed. Why? Because when the Lord is your One Thing you will experience Him as your light, salvation and stronghold. And if he is, whom shall you fear? What could possibly make you anxious? (upset, rattle, disturb, steal your peace)
- 6 Now all of us here would say the Lord is my "one thing" because we want him to be. That is our ambition, our desire and what we believe theologically speaking. But if we could access our heart what we would find is that sometimes other good things become our "one thing."
- a All of us have/want good things in our lives and we love them. Good things like loving mothers and fathers, healthy marriage and children who serve God, family and friends to do life with. Good things like careers that fulfill and homes to decorate and hobbies to enjoy.
- b And we all have good desires in our life like wanting to make our life count, wanting to see the world, wanting to be all we can be or wanting to leave a legacy. All sorts of things are good things.
- c But when a good thing or good desire becomes the "one thing" we think we have to have in order to be happy it will inevitably produce anxiety, anger, sadness or disillusionment.
- Why is that? Because good things can never be "one things." No created good thing can completely satisfy the human heart. Only God himself can do that.
 - No good thing can bear the full weight of the need of our heart. It will collapse under the pressure of trying to get from it what only God can provide.

- And that's where the anxiety, anger, sadness and disillusionment comes from. It comes when good things are not enough or when good things remain just out of your reach.
- d So what you do when you experience inordinate anxiety, fear, worry, anger, despair is trace it back to the substitute "one thing" that has usurped the place of the true "One Thing" in your life.
 - That's what David did in Psalm 42 when he asked the diagnostic question, "Why so downcast O my soul" and then followed it up with the solution, "Put your hope in God."
 - If the solution was putting his hope in God then problem must have been that his hope was in something other than God. Someone or something else was his one thing.

How do we pursue the Lord as our One Thing?

1 Gaze at the beauty of the Lord.

- a The beauty(s) of the Lord are his attributes like his grace, goodness, mercy, justice, righteousness, holiness and love. They are the things that make God, God ... and attract us to God.
- b For example when you think about the love of God for us, how undeserving we were, how freely it was given to us in Jesus sacrifice and how costly it was for the Father to give up his Son for us ,, you see the beauty of God and your attracted to Him.
- c And this attractiveness is what makes Christianity so different from mere religion. Jonathan Edwards once made a comparison between a Christian who has an inner delight in God and a religious person who has only an outward duty to God. They both seek God but for different reasons.
 - The religious person has found something so beautiful to their heart they seek God to obtain it. The Christian has found God so beautiful they seek God to obtain him.
 - The religious person seeks because they are driven, the Christian seeks because they are attracted. The religious person finds God useful, a Christian finds God beautiful.
- d So how do you gaze on the beauty of God?
 - Gazing is not just looking. Looking is something you do to get information. You don't gaze at something to get information. You gaze at something out of admiration.

- e Illustration: It's like touring a large art gallery where priceless paintings are on display. Let's assume you have a great appreciation for fine art.
- You do not move through the gallery quickly glancing at each painting. No you move slowly and stop to admire.
 - Now think of those paintings each one portraying an attribute of God (Love, mercy, grace, etc.) You do not move quickly. You stop and admire.
 - And what is that admiration for God and his attributes? It's worship. Gazing is worshipping. And the more we worship God for his beauty ...
 - the more God becomes our one thing,
 - the less substitute one things control us and therefore
 - the more happiness, freedom and security in the Lord we experience!

2 Seek the Lord in his temple

- a The Hebrew Word translated seek is a rare word only used seven times in the OT. It means to "plough up and discover" which suggests that seeking God involves a deep, intentional effort to uncover and understand His will so as to obey it.
- b For David this seeking was done in the temple or at the Tabernacle. At the Tabernacle he observed the rituals put in place by God to teach the Israelites about his nature and about what he was going to one day do for them and for all people.
- c So David watched as the priests sacrificed bulls and goats on the bronze altar in the midst of the courtyard. How could that be beautiful?
- Well in those sacrifices he saw a God who was holy and just, a God who could not overlook sin and thus required payment for sin, a God with perfect righteousness.
 - On the other hand he also saw a God who was so loving and merciful he provided a substitute for the people sins so we they could come into his presence. He saw a God who wanted to forgive and restore, a God who wanted to make a way for Adam's descendants to come back into the Garden of God.
- d A few years after David died his son, Solomon, built the permanent replacement for the Tabernacle, the Temple in Jerusalem. Centuries later Jesus is standing next to that Temple and says to the religious leaders, *"Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."* ²⁰ They

replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” (John 2:19–20).

- e The text goes on to say Jesus was referring to his death and resurrection. The destroying was symbolic of his death and the raising up referred to his resurrection. In other words he was the ultimate Temple of God and everything that took place in it symbolized his Person and his work on the cross.
- f Now if David was able to gaze at the beauty of God through the tabernacle and the temple worship, how much more of the beauty of God will we see if we gaze at God through the face of Jesus?
 - We don’t have to look at him through a bull being slaughtered on the altar. We see him as the Savior who died for us on the cross and rose from the dead.
 - And as we *seek* to plough up and discover what Scripture reveals about our Savior, his life, death, resurrection and the implications thereof, he will, more and more become our One Thing.

1 Gaze

2 Seek

3 Wait for/on the Lord

*⁷ Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. ⁸ My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, LORD, I will seek. ⁹ Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. ¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence. ¹³ I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. ¹⁴ **Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:7-14).***

- 1 This psalm ends with a great promise and encouragement. David says I will see the goodness of the Lord on this side of heaven. So he concludes by saying to his heart, “Wait for the Lord.”
 - a Waiting for the Lord is an OT expression that means to place one’s trust in God’s plan and timing, even when the path ahead seems unclear.
 - b It is not a passive exercise, like waiting on the bus, but an active reliance on God's strength and promises.

- 2 That's how the psalm ends. But for the most part, in the second half of the psalm, the tone dramatically changes.
 - a Instead of the Lord is my light and salvation whom shall I fear (v1) we read David calling out, *O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me* (v7).
 - b Instead of David gazing upon the beauty of the Lord (v4) we read David crying out to the Lord, *Do not hide your face from me.* (v9).
 - c Instead of the bold proclamation, *in the day of trouble he will keep me safe* (v5) we read the prayer, *do not turn me over to the desire of my foes* (v12).
- 3 What's going on here? Well in the first half of the psalm David feels strong in the Lord and he knows the Lord is his one thing. In the second half that strength and passion are being tested.
 - a In the first half his eyes are on heaven and he is filled with a vision of God's greatness.
 - b In the second half he has glanced down to the earth and he sees that his enemy is still there about to attack again.
- 4 So what we have here is the unfolding of two closely related moods that we also experience in our own walk with the Lord.
 - a It is not uncommon in the midst of difficulties to experience confidence in the Lord and in the same time frame moments of doubt and fear.
 - b But by God's design these momentary doubts and fears actually serve to compel hearts to once again seek God's face. *My heart says of you, "Seek his face!"* (v8a).
 - c And when we do we are once again reminded that *the Lord is our light, salvation and stronghold.*
- 5 And this cycle is the life of faith. Living a life where the Lord is your One Thing is not a place that you reach or attain where you never deal with doubt, discouragement, fear or anxiety again.
 - a It is a life of looking to the Lord often to be reminded of who He is and then facing the enemy and then looking to the Lord again and then facing your circumstances again, and then looking to the Lord again.
 - b It is a life of seeking the Lord as your one thing and then realizing something else has slipped in to be your one thing and repenting of it and once again seeking the Lord as your one thing. And it is doing that over and over again.

- 6 And I think that is important to know because sometimes people assume that confidence/faith in God, passion for God is constant ... that if it is challenged or momentarily diminishes, it was not genuine to begin with.
- a No ... there are times when, like David, your faith/passion in God is strong. And there were other times, like David, when it feels like your faith/passion is shrinking back.
- There are times when you sense the Lord as your one thing and others where your heart seems divided.
 - There are times where you are gazing on his beauty and other times where you are distracted by other things.
- b But David says regardless God will not forsake you (v10). And if you keep gazing at the beauty of the Lord and seeking Him as your “one thing” you can be confident that you will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.
- c So, *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord (v14)*

Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 How can we practically cultivate a longing to 'taste and see' the goodness of God in our daily lives as suggested in Psalm 27?
- 2 In what ways can the concept of God being our light, salvation, and stronghold change the way we address fears and uncertainties?
- 3 Why might it be challenging for believers to move from merely knowing about God to truly experiencing His presence?
- 4 How does Psalm 27 challenge the idea of positive thinking and the 'Law of Attraction' by emphasizing God's sovereignty over life's outcomes?
- 5 What are some 'good things' in our lives that might become substitute 'one things,' and how can we realign our desires to keep God at the center?
- 6 How do we balance moments of strong faith with times of doubt in our relationship with God, and what lessons can we learn from David's example?